

## [Ku Klux Stories]

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Accession no.

10243

Date received 10/10/40

Consignment no. 1

Shipped from Wash. Office

Amount 5 p

WPA L. C. PROJECT Writers' UNIT

Form[md;]3 Folklore Collection (or Type

Title Ku Klux Stories

Place of origin Spartanburg S.C. Date 10/19/37

Project worker

Project editor Elmer Turnage

Remarks Local history - & traditions

W10243

Project 1885-1

## Library of Congress

Folklore

Spartanburg, Dist. 4

Oct. 19, 1937 390539

Edited by:

Elmer Turnage [Groups?] 4 1/2 pp.

[KU KLUX STORIES?]

"In 1872 the negroes made a raid to take Union, but the day was saved by the Ku Klux Klan.

"Out where the the Monarch Mill now stands there lived a 'bad woman'. She was the only immoral woman in Union at that time. Mr. Moultrie Gibbs had come to town in his buggy and had started back home. He stopped at a 'blind tiger', where the Union Times office is now located, and purchased some liquor. He then drove on and stopped at the woman's house. He stayed so long that his horse got tired of waiting for him and went back home. When he came out, he saw that his horse had gone and he thought the Ku Klux had taken it. He lived fourteen miles away and had no way to get home. He went back to the town of Union and spent the night.

"The next day when he got home, he found that the horse had gone safely home and stopped the buggy under the shed where it always stayed. His overseer thinking that he had fallen out of the buggy, had sent out to look for him. Everything that Mr. Gibbs had bought was in the buggy. Nobody knows how the horse and empty buggy escaped being taken into custody by the Ku Klux or captured by the maurading negroes.

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"The above mentioned woman also ran a 'blind tiger' and I suppose she was the first woman in Union to ever run one, or maybe the first woman in public business in Union.

"Anyway, the negroes thought they could overcome the white folks by the aid of their devilish carpet-bag and scalawag leaders. Seventeen negroes went to Mr. John McKissick's house to rob him, or 2 at least they had started there. They stopped at Upper Fairforest church which was built of logs. There they decided to go and kill one of the Belue men who lived nearer the church than Mr. McKissick. While they were hemming and hawing about which house they should go to first, they continued beyond the church into a thick woods.

"In the woodland, the mountain people hid liquor which had revenue stamps on it. The liquor, of course, was brought down from North Carolina. A one-arm man named Matt Stevens was employed to haul the liquor into town. He used a one-horse wagon in which he kept straw to hide the liquor. Mr. Stevens and a Mr. Robinson were bringing in a wagon-load of liquor to Union to deliver on this occasion. In these woods they met two of the seventeen negroes. They demanded the liquor. Mr. Robinson ran but Mr. Stevens stayed in the wagon. Seventeen shots were fired at Mr. Robinson but he got safely behind the church, and some of the bullets sank into the logs near him. Mr. Robinson ran on and tried to jump over a rail fence. One of the negroes shot at him, so he pretended he had been hit and fell to the ground.

"The negroes thinking Mr. Robinson had been killed, returned to Mr. Stevens and killed him. They then killed his mule and drank all the whiskey they wanted and bursted the kegs. Robinson got near enough to the negroes after they were drunk to see who they were. He made his way through the woodland over the rough country to the courthouse in Union by four o'clock the next morning.

"Mr. Robinson reported the tragedy and told who the negroes were; then went to the hotel to rest. Here, he told some members of the Ku Klux Klan what had happened.

"Phillip Dunn was the sheriff at that time and the deputy was a brother of Matt Stevens. The officers found the negroes looking for Robinson in the woods and they brought all of them to jail. (The jail then was the same one which is there now.) The courthouse was a stone structure situated where the present one is.

"After the negroes were brought to jail, the Ku Klux went and asked for the keys. The sheriff and deputy went away leaving the keys behind. Of course, the Klansmen got the keys and went to where the negroes were and got them. They carried the keys back and placed them on the nail from which they had been taken! The negroes were carried to the hanging ground and hung to a big old hickory tree.

"Dr. Wallace Thompson pleaded for the life of one of the negroes, Jim Hardy, and he was not hung. He told of plans to kill every old and young white man and all the old white women in both Union and Chester Counties. They were going to capture the young white women. Jim was never killed and he stuck to the good white people until his death. A biggety negro in the bunch was buried alive at the hanging ground, and then his body was taken up and allowed to freeze on top of the ground. So many bullets were fired into the big hickory that it soon died.

"After Jim told his story, the Ku Klux went from Union to join those in Chester. On this trip they did not go disguised. Robert McCreight, a brother of mine, guarded Turkey Creek Bridge between Chester and Union until they got back.

"When the Ku Klux from both counties got to that bridge, they got all of the negroes they could from both sides and killed them and dammed up the stream with their bodies. Getts Jeter, a cruel blacksmith, was killed at this bridge. A placard with the following 4 words was tied on his chest and he was left lying on top of a pile of the dead for everybody to read it: 'As a rule, big rails lie on the bottom; now, big rail lies on top'. Later, his body was put up on a rail fence where all could see it.

"My brother told of a Chester boy who had a Winchester rifle and helped in the search for the negroes. Every time that boy shot, he killed a negro. The Ku klux set fire to a house where some negroes were taking refuge. Every time a negro ran out of the house, he was shot. Some of them were burned alive. Some of the older fellows wanted to borrow that boy's Winchester, but he would not give it up. All the others had old breech-loaders and muzzle guns.

"Some of the Ku Klux in Union were cleaning up the negroes here. When this trouble was over, there was no more trouble with the negroes in Union and Chester. When my brother got back to Turkey Creek he pitched his gun into the creek and went on to his home nearby. He said that he has no more use for that gun.

"The Yankees who had the State government in charge tried to give trouble. My brother came back to Union and went out to Sardis where he stayed with mother and kept himself in seclusion. Mother and I lived together and I had an older brother who lived in York County. He was wounded in the Confederate army. He did not belong to the Ku Klux. About this time he came to see mother and he wanted to take me, back home with him. The Yankees thought he was my older brother, Robert, and got after him. He then joined the Ku Klux and went to the Blue Ridge Mountains, after he had killed a Yankee and a carpetbagger or two. In the mountains he sold his two horses. He kept \$25 and sent the balance of the money back to his cousin in York by a trusty negro. The negro delivered the money and the Yankees never knew about it.

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He wrote to mother, but he did not sign his name. A long time passed, and after the State was out of the carpetbag rule, he wrote us that he was living in Mississippi and doing well. He told us that he had redeemed land owned by our cousin, Sam McCreight, Jr. He married a Mississippi lady. In 1897 he came back to Union County and bought land at

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Sardis. After a few years, his wife and children became ill and wanted to go back to their native state. He carried them back to Mississippi where they are buried.

"I live with my brother's son, Sam, who was named for my brother in Mississippi. A cotton mill marks the site on Sandy River in Chester County where the Klan used to meet in an old house hidden by vegetation. Jails were filled with fine white men whom the Yankees thought were members of the Ku Klux Klan. Of course, the Ku Klux turned them out and the Yankees quieted down and went back to where they came from when they saw they could not down us. No, the Yankees never did conquer us and they never will. We are victorious."

Source: Mr. David A. McCreight (79, W), Ninety-Six, S.C. Interviewer: Caldwell Sims, Union, S.C. (9/20/37)